

WHAT IS THE NH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM?

NHEP is both a financial assistance program and a work program. The work program helps NH families become self-supporting by providing employment opportunities, job readiness, education, and training services. NHEP's focus is "Work First." This means every NHEP activity has one goal - employment.

The NHEP Work Program has several stages:

- **First**, a group orientation will outline the activities and services available for you in the NHEP. You will be asked to complete an Employability Plan (EP) and be given a portfolio of self-directed activities that help you prepare for the job you want. You may have to attend the orientation in order to get financial assistance.
- **Next**, if you are found eligible for cash, you will have a one-on-one meeting with your Employment Counselor Specialist (ECS) to tailor your EP, review the activities you have completed in your portfolio, discuss other appropriate activities, and address any other services you may need. **You will continue to work with your ECS as you participate in employment, work placement, education, and/or training activities.**

DOES EVERYONE HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE NHEP WORK PROGRAM?

If you are aged 16 to 60, you are expected to participate in NHEP unless **exempt**. You are considered exempt if one of the following situations applies to you:

1. you are temporarily unable to participate due to a verified medical condition or you are taking care of someone in your household with a verified medical condition;
2. you are four or more months pregnant with a verified medical condition;
3. you are a dependent child age 16 or older who is a full-time student in elementary, secondary, vocational/ technical school or the equivalent;

4. your youngest child is under age 1. However if you have been exempt for more than 12 months for this reason, you will be mandatory for NHEP when your youngest child turns 12 weeks; **or**
5. you are a parent under age 20 and do not have a high school diploma or its equivalency. In this case, you will be expected to participate in basic educational activities beginning when your child is 12 weeks old.

Exemptions are not available to most 2-parent families or to most individuals who have received cash assistance for 39 months.

Remember: Even if exempt, **every month** you receive financial assistance counts towards your 60-month lifetime limit.

WHEN WILL THE WORK PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS BEGIN?

Work requirements begin immediately upon being determined eligible for cash assistance. Once you are found eligible, you will attend a one-on-one meeting with your ECS to review the work you have done so far in your portfolio. Working with your ECS, you will participate in different activities aimed at helping you prepare for, find, and keep a job that will support your family without financial assistance.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I MEET WITH AN ECS?

We will ask you to tell us about:

- your work and education history; **and**
- anything that needs to be considered as you prepare to become employed.

You and your ECS will meet regularly to work together to:

- develop your EP;
- review your portfolio of self-directed activities;
- find the right activity or activities for you; **and**
- determine any services you may need.

You must:

- take part in activities listed on your EP;
- go to all scheduled appointments, interviews, and workshops; **and**
- accept suitable work and keep it.

WHAT SUPPORT SERVICES CAN I GET WHILE I AM IN THE NHEP?

Most NHEP participants get child care assistance and mileage reimbursement if in an approved NHEP activity. Participants who are in approved **work** activities may also receive assistance with:

- car repairs;
- tools, fees, and uniforms needed for work;
- tuition for approved training programs; **and**
- payments to help you remove an obstacle to employment, such as help with cosmetic dental care, car insurance, car registration, clothing for work, or driver's license fees.

Be sure to tell your Family Services Specialist (FSS) and ECS right away if you go to work. If your financial assistance ends after you go to work, you may still receive:

- extended medical assistance for yourself and your children for up to 12 months;
- help with child care costs;
- help in solving problems that might cause you to leave work; **and**
- Extended Food Stamp (EFS) benefits.

WHAT IF I AM UNABLE TO WORK, BUT DO NOT HAVE AN EXEMPTION?

Some people have serious barriers to employment, such as substance abuse, legal problems, family or domestic violence, or homelessness. NHEP provides a number of services to help resolve these barriers. We can also help get the services you need from community resources.

If you would like help in dealing with problems such as these, let us know. If you are, or have been, a victim of family/domestic violence, you may be excused from certain requirements and an alternative work plan may be put into place.

Talk to your ECS or anyone at the Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) to find out where there is help.

WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR ITS EQUIVALENCY?

The NHEP can help you get your diploma or its equivalency. **You must work toward a high school diploma or equivalent if you are a:**

- parent under age 20 without a high school diploma or equivalent and whose youngest child is age 12 weeks or older; **or**
- child in a case who is age 16 or 17, not in school, and does not have a high school diploma or equivalent.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I MISS APPOINTMENTS OR I DO NOT FOLLOW MY EP?

Your Employability Plan is like a contract. It states what you must do to reach your employment goals, and what we must do to help you.

We expect you to cooperate with NHEP requirements and follow your EP. If you do not, you will get a *Notice of Not Meeting a NHEP Requirement*. It will tell you what may happen as a result, such as your financial assistance ending and allowable "*good cause reasons*" for not following your plan.

WHAT IS A "GOOD CAUSE" REASON?

Good cause means something out of your control happened that prevented you from participating in NHEP. The following are some examples of good cause reasons that may prevent you from participating with NHEP requirements:

- you or someone in your house was ill or disabled enough that you had to stay home;
- you did not have adequate child care, dependent care, or transportation;
- taking a job would mean a loss of income to your family;
- you had a required court appearance or appointment that you could not change (not

an appointment you requested, such as with a dentist, doctor, or teacher);

- there was an unreasonable risk to your health or safety or the health or safety of any member of your household; **or**
- someone in the family is experiencing or has experienced family/domestic violence.

WHAT IF I QUIT A JOB?

Voluntary quit is when, without good cause, you quit a job of at least 20 hours per week within 60 days before the date you apply for financial help, or you quit or refuse a job while receiving financial assistance. *Voluntary quit policy applies to everyone who applies for, or is receiving, Financial Assistance To Needy Families, even if not required to participate in work activities.*

ARE THERE GOOD CAUSE REASONS FOR QUITTING OR REFUSING A JOB?

Here are some examples of good cause reasons for quitting or refusing a job:

- Your employer discriminated against you based on age, race, sex, color, physical or mental disability, political or religious belief, or national origin.
- Work demands or conditions posed an unreasonable risk to your health and safety.
- The job paid less than minimum wage.
- You left your job to attend school or training at least half time.
- You left to take another job, and circumstances beyond your control caused the new job offer to be withdrawn.

WHAT IF I DISAGREE WITH THE DECISION ABOUT MY GOOD CAUSE REASON?

If we do not approve your good cause reason and you disagree with our decision you have the right to request an administrative appeal.

There are limited time frames during which you can appeal certain actions. Carefully read your Notice of Decision, and the Notice of Rights and Responsibilities that comes with it, to be sure how long you have to request a hearing or review.

WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE GOOD CAUSE FOR NOT MEETING NHEP REQUIREMENTS?

You will be sanctioned if you fail or refuse to participate in NHEP activities or you quit or refuse a job without good cause while receiving assistance. When you are sanctioned, your cash benefit will be lower for at least one payment or stop entirely. Your payments will go down even more or could stop entirely if you continue to fail or refuse to meet the program requirements. There are three levels of payment reductions:

- Level 1: Your cash benefit will go down by an amount equal to your portion of the FANF “payment standard” (about \$70). If you remain at a Level 1 for 2 weeks, your payment reductions automatically go to a Level 2.
- Level 2: Your cash benefit after Level 1 is further reduced by 1/3. If you remain at a Level 2 for 4 weeks, your payment reductions automatically go to a Level 3.
- Level 3: Your cash benefit after Level 1 is further reduced by 2/3. If you remain at a Level 3 for 4 weeks, your cash benefits will close.

Additionally, your cash benefits will close if:

- you have been in sanction status for a cumulative period of 3 months over a 12-month period;
- you reach a level 3 sanction and still fail to comply; or
- your cash benefit falls below the minimum allowable grant amount after being decreased by any level of sanction.

You must fully comply with NHEP requirements for 2 consecutive weeks to lift a sanction or for your benefits to reopen if they were terminated due to a sanction.

Every month you receive cash assistance, even if it is a smaller amount due to a sanction, counts towards your 60-month lifetime limit.

More information about the New Hampshire Employment Program is available on the web at: www.dhhs.nh.gov/DFA/TANF/employment.htm

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The
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(NHEP)



NHEP is a collaborative effort of the
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www.dhhs.nh.gov/DFA/TANF/employment.htm